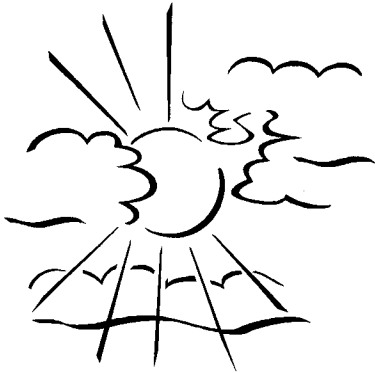


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(517) 373-7394



\*Important story at this spot

# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Monday, January 9, 2006**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

TOPIC	PAGE
*Energy Assistance	2-13
Health Care	14-23
Homelessness	24-31
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	32-38
Domestic Violence	39
Juvenile Justice	40
Adoption	41-42
Charities	43-44
Welfare Reform	45-47
Welfare Study	48
State Budget	49
State Employees	50
Michigan Heart Gallery	51-52

# High heating bills have lawmakers thinking about more assistance

1/8/2006, 8:57 a.m. ET

By AMY F. BAILEY  
The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Jean Casler used the cash she received for Christmas to help cover her heating bill last month, but she doesn't know how she's going to make her January payment. "I don't see any way that I am going to get that money," said Casler, a 70-year-old Lansing-area resident who has multiple sclerosis and only a \$620 monthly disability check to pay her bills.

Casler is among many low-income people in Michigan who already are tapping into programs that help pay for heat, but need more this winter because of significantly higher fuel rates. Their plight has prompted a number of state lawmakers to draw up legislation that would cover more low-income residents and give them more aid, prevent utility shutoffs during the winter months and offer tax credits to people who buy energy efficient appliances.

House Republicans want to lift the income requirement to receive the Home Heating Credit from 110 percent of poverty — \$17,699 for a family of three — to 130 percent, or \$20,917.

Democrats, meanwhile, want to ban utilities from shutting off heat service in the winter because of overdue bills, give the Michigan Public Service Commission the ability to use \$5 million of research money to help people pay heating bills and set up a database to coordinate volunteers available to make homes more energy efficient.

Protections already are in place to prevent shutoffs for some utility customers. Casler, for example, is enrolled in the Winter Protection Program, which allows her to pay a small portion of her heating bill and avoid shutoffs from November to March. She said her monthly bill from Jackson-based Consumers Energy is \$86, which she said it still too much.

Although lawmakers are looking at more measures to make heating bills affordable, they may not be able to pass them in time to help people such as Casler this heating season. Yet many groups that help people pay their energy bills said improvements are needed now.

Kathleen Walgren, executive director of The Heat and Warmth Fund, a nonprofit group that provides emergency assistance to people facing shutoffs, said she doesn't think the organization will have enough money this winter to get help to everyone who needs it.

The nonprofit organization has received about \$4.5 million from the Michigan Public Service Commission to help low-income people cover their high energy bills and is raising extra money, Walgren said. Last year, it had \$6.5 million altogether, she said.

While the group's funding is likely to be close to last year's levels, heating bills are up by nearly 50 percent, Walgren said. Its resources also may be drained faster than previous years because more people need help covering bigger bills, she said.

"We're going to get a lot of angry customers, people who don't like to be in the situation of having to ask for help," she said. "People are confused. They don't know how to apply and they've never had to do this before. They're sort of insulted they have to look for help."

Low-income individuals and families are not the only ones trying to deal with high energy rates this winter. Many middle-income families are making more room in their budgets for the higher costs while trying to find ways to use less energy.

Monthly natural gas bills for Consumers Energy Co.'s average residential customers are up nearly \$42 in January from the same month last year, or 33 percent, according to the Michigan Public Service Commission. Increases were bigger for Michigan Consolidated Gas Co. customers, who are paying \$76.26 more than last year, a 59 percent increase, the commission said.

Those increases are felt by most of the homeowners in the state because nearly 80 percent of the homes in Michigan are heated with natural gas, according to the 2000 census.

"This is just an extraordinarily bad situation and we need to find long-term solutions," said state Rep. John Proos, vice chairman of the House Energy and Technology Committee. "We need to address the entire landscape of energy needs."

Proos, R-St. Joseph, wants the committee to look for ways to improve the state's overall energy system, including generation, transmission and capacity.

In the meantime, hard-hit consumers are turning to groups such as Urban Options Inc., a nonprofit agency based in East Lansing that promotes energy efficiency. The group has received so many calls from people trying to find ways to lower their heating bills that it had to replace its two-line system with four lines.

"Our phones are ringing off the hook, literally," said Aileen Gow, Urban Options executive director. "At this point, high energy costs have caught everyone's attention because it's hitting people in the pocketbooks. These are very difficult economic times and there's a lot of uncertainty."

Gow's group provides free weatherization assessments to low-income people. It also hosts tours of an East Lansing house renovated to be more energy efficient that features a solar roof and double-paned windows coated to reflect heat.

After hearing that heating bills would be up this winter, Lansing resident Julia Zehr installed a programmable thermostat that automatically drops the temperature in her 1920s-era house while she's not there during the day, put up curtains to stop heat loss through her windows and laid towels along the windowsills to stop drafts.

She said the changes already are making a difference.

"The December bill I got was cheaper than the worst of the season last year, which was \$200-something. This one was \$145," said Zehr, a 34-year-old postdoctoral student at Michigan State University. "It compensates for all those days we left it running last year."

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On the Net:

Michigan House Republicans: <http://www.gophouse.com>

Michigan House Democrats: <http://www.housedems.com>

The Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW): <http://www.thawfund.org/>

Urban Options Inc.: <http://www.urbanoptions.org/>

# Anxiety rising with heating bills Some call for help to prevent shut-offs

Saturday, January 07, 2006

BY JO COLLINS MATHIS  
Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

They warned us a hike was coming, and that we had Katrina and Rita to thank. But that didn't dull the shock when local residents opened their most recent heating bills.

"I couldn't believe it," said Jeanne Gould, 74, who has lived in her 14- by 70-foot mobile home in Ypsilanti Township for 28 years. "And I don't cook that much. And I've got two bedrooms that are closed off. To me, it doesn't seem right."

Experts say disruption of natural gas production in the Gulf of Mexico because of the hurricanes reduced supply, driving up prices. U.S. energy officials estimate that homeowners nationwide this winter will end up paying 50 percent to 70 percent more for natural gas this winter, 31 percent more for heating oil, 41 percent more for propane and 17 percent more for electricity. Gould is on DTE Energy's equal monthly billing plan to avoid the extra-high bills during the winter. But the \$144 bill - up from \$119 - is a significant hike for someone on a fixed budget, she said.

From November through March, the average DTE customer using 125,000 cubic feet of natural gas will pay about \$240 a month, or 50 percent more than last year, said Michigan DTE Energy spokesman Scott Simons.

That's a bill some customers will have trouble paying, which is why customers have been calling DTE asking for information on cost-cutting measures and equal monthly billing plans, like the one Gould is on.

"Our customers are in for a very difficult winter," said Simons, who says his own heating bill was more than \$300.

But even people with the means to pay their bills had a rude awakening this week. John O'Keefe's wife, Mary Ellen, called out to him when the natural gas bill arrived in the mail this week at their Ann Arbor home.

"She came to me and said 'This is outrageous,'" O'Keefe said.

There it was, in black and white: \$420. Natural gas totaled \$319 of it, with electricity making up the balance. The bill stood in stark contrast with what the family paid the previous month, just \$191.54 for the whole energy bill.

"I expected it would be higher this time, but not that high," he said. "That's well over 90 percent (higher). That's the thing that kind of grabbed me."

The bill was an even bigger jolt for Christine Craig, who opened up a \$510 energy tab, \$370 of which was for natural gas.

"I was shocked. But then again there's not a lot I can actually do about it," Craig said.

Craig went online to compare her bills over the course of the last year. In January of last year she paid about \$340 for natural gas, but her household used 35 percent more during that month than in December.

Like many residents concerned with maintaining their bills, Craig said she's tried to keep her thermostat down, and for the first winter since moving into her Ann Arbor home several years ago has kept her gas-fired fireplace off for the entire season.

Ken Costello, an economist specializing in natural gas and electricity at Ohio State University, said a U.S. Department of Energy report this week showed natural gas inventories are higher than expected and a mild start to the winter have helped drive down short-term, or "spot" natural gas prices on the market. But that may not mean much relief for consumers in the short term. "If the prices go down for the spot price, they may not go down until a few months later (for consumers)," he said.

Despite the price hikes, Costello actually expected them to be worse.

"I think we're fortunate, at least in parts of the country where the weather has been pretty mild in the last few weeks," he said. "Otherwise, bills would be far higher."

The biggest impact is on the lower-income population. Since November, people have been calling Neighborhood Senior Services in Ypsilanti for help paying their gas bills and preventing utility shut-offs.

"It's not just the older adult population," said Jill Ratajczak, director of social work for Neighborhood Senior Services. "It's all the vulnerable populations in Washtenaw County who are dealing with this."

Depending on circumstances, some callers are able to receive help from the Human Services Community Collaborative's Barrier Busters, which assists with emergency needs. Others may qualify to receive free help in the way of weather stripping and furnace inspections through the county's weatherization program.

Ratajczak last month paid a gas bill of \$109 to heat her apartment in an historic building in Ypsilanti. She said that was twice what she paid last year, despite the fact that she rarely turns the heat up above 65 degrees.

"I can't afford to," she said. "I don't know how I'm going to pay my gas bill. It's going to really dig into other expenses I have. Like groceries."

DTE's Simons said the best way to lower the bill is to dial down the thermostat because every degree saves 3 percent on the heating bill. Customers should also schedule a heating system check-up to make sure the furnace is running at full efficiency, and replace furnace filters monthly during the heating system.

"Dirty filters block the air flow in your home and also cause the furnace to work harder and less economically," he said.

DTE, which has 1.2 million customers throughout Michigan, is able to buy natural gas when the price is lower because it has a very large underground storage capacity.

Asked if there's much hope for a decrease in costs, Simons said that realistically, demand far exceeds the supply.

"Natural gas is a commodity just like any other commodity traded on the New York Mercantile Exchange," he said. "With the advent of using natural gas to produce electricity, a lot of the demand is going in that direction. And there's no new sources of natural gas. Natural gas from aging wells isn't keeping pace with demand, and new wells are yielding less gas. So as a result, gas storage reserves have fallen to their lowest levels since the 1970s."

Temperatures were colder this December than last, so DTE Energy customers used about 10 percent more natural gas to heat their homes, and paid 50 percent more for it.

Like other Michigan utility companies, including DTE, Consumers Energy began a campaign last fall to warn customers that the higher prices were coming and advised them what to do about them, said Consumers Energy spokeswoman Debra Dodd.

"That's why we're seeing just a slight increase in call volume lately," Dodd said.

She said the customer with a \$130 gas bill last winter should expect to pay about \$45 more each month this winter.

Linda Shaw, who lives in a condominium in Ypsilanti said November's gas bill was \$80, up from \$60 last November.

She knows she's lucky. "The bill isn't as ugly as it would be for a home," she said.

But she's not exactly happy.

"It's hard to believe they have to charge this new rate to cover the cost, and that it's not price-gauging," said Shaw, whose mother isn't happy about her 40 percent hike in the bill at her Belleville home. "I feel the same way at the gas pumps sometimes."

Jeanne Gould said the thought of taking her cockapoo and moving to a warmer climate is tempting.

"But then there are hurricanes," she said. "If you go to the West Coast, there are earthquakes. You're between a rock and a hard place."

She said the only two splurges she has are cable TV and the daily newspaper.

"After this, I'm going after Comcast," she said. "They're going up, too."

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# Families struggling as utility bills soar

By ANGELA MULLINS  
Times Herald

Making the ends of a household budget meet is getting more difficult, financial experts said.

With local unemployment numbers still high and bills for everything from natural gas to electricity on the rise in 2005, now is the time, experts said, to take stock of what's in the bank and make it last.

Making matters worse, gasoline prices already have risen in the first week of 2006, and Comcast is poised to increase cable rates next month.

For many families, the bigger bills may mean setting up a more detailed household budget than they have ever had. For others, it may simply mean tightening the belt a little more.

Ted Hernandez, 39, of Port Huron said that likely will be the only choice for his family. A single father of four who gets steady work whenever he can find it, Hernandez already has seen his heating bill double from \$70 to \$140 this winter. The only way for his family to get by, Hernandez said, is to cut corners. "I figured (bills) would go up, but not that much," he said. "I'll keep the temperature down and buy a little less of something else."

## Straining prices

Increased utility bill rates came early in 2005.

SEMCO Energy Inc. in March announced a monthly charge increase of about \$2 for Blue Water Area residents. That move was followed several months later by an increase in the amount customers are charged per 1,000 cubic feet of natural gas usage.

For October alone, the increase was about 35% more than at the same time in 2004.

Adding to the utility bill crunch, Detroit Edison last week rolled out plans for \$3.83 monthly increase for the average electricity customer, and Comcast plans a February increase of nearly 6% for preferred basic subscribers.

Outside the home, consumers in 2005 were left shelling out big bucks at the gas pumps.

In August, fuel prices locally reached record levels with many pumps ringing in at more than \$3 a gallon.

Prices remained high throughout the year, with Michigan's average falling at \$2.33 per gallon earlier this week - still up from \$1.75 a gallon one year ago.

While the sour economy and increased rates first hit families that already were struggling financially, others are now beginning to feel budget pains. Even with a steady cash flow, several area residents said, bills are beginning to exceed the manageable limit.

"When your income stays the same but your bills go up, sometimes things just don't get paid," said Fred Zabo, 45, of Port Huron. "I used to not worry, but I'm beginning to feel pinched."



## **Making it work**

There's no doubt that some people don't have the money to meet recent cost-of-living increases, said Tom McTaggart, a certified public accountant with Lewis & Associates in Fort Gratiot.

But for many, making ends meet could just be a matter of readjustment.

First and foremost, experts said, people need to make certain they have a household budget that is sound. With quick and easy credit card offers and financing options available for major purchases, it can be easy to get carried away, McTaggart said, but people need to avoid the temptation and keep close track of where their paychecks are going.

In many cases, there really is no other option than to cut back.

McTaggart recommends using a computer program such as Quicken or Microsoft Money that allow people to categorize their spending and track where their money is going.

Watching the flow of money is more important for families now than ever, McTaggart said.

"When you ask people where they are spending their money, a lot of people really don't know," he said. "If you don't have good information (about spending), you can't make good decisions."

While budgets are individual to every household, there's usually some place families can find to cut expenses in order to shift extra dollars to utility bills and gasoline, said Laura Hatton, a credit counselor at Consumer Credit Management in Farmington Hills.

That could mean cutting out high cable bills, Internet access or even shaving money off grocery expenses.

"We do go through budgets with people and see how many people are in the household and where the money is going," Hatton said. "People can definitely cut back."

## **Looking ahead**

With bleak predictions for Michigan's economy continuing to ring true, it could be some time before people see their household budgets return to normal.

Experts don't expect to see the cost of living dip nearly as quickly as it increased.

"Personally, I'm very pessimistic about the economy right now," said McTaggart, the Fort Gratiot accountant. "We're looking at a least a year where the economy is going to be tight. We have to adjust."

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# Residents feel heat of energy costs

Friday, January 06, 2006

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When Sharon Fitzpatrick opened up her December Consumers Energy bill, she immediately threw it across the floor, amazed by the cost -- nearly \$100 more than December 2004.

"I also said a few choice words," said Fitzpatrick, who lives in Plainwell with her husband, Archie. "I couldn't believe how much it was."

Sharon taped the bill next to her home's thermostat, which is set at 68 degrees during the day and 65 at night, as a reminder not to be too liberal with the heat.

During previous winters, the Fitzpatricks had paid \$80 to \$90 per month on heating costs. The December bill came in at \$180.

The Fitzpatricks, who are on a fixed income, installed more insulation in their roof and are wearing sweaters more this winter to fight the soaring costs of heating their home.

But for those who are in need of more than just a few extra layers to keep warm this winter, Consumers Energy offers a host of different programs for those who are having trouble paying their home heating bills.

One of the more popular programs is the Winter Protection Plan, which was created by Consumers and offers low-income customers and seniors 65 and older protection from service shut-off and high payments during the winter. The program began Nov. 1 and runs until March 31.

People who qualify pay 6 percent of their estimated annual bill, plus part of any past-due amount. After March 31, customers pay their usual monthly bills, plus part of the amount they owe from previous bills.

Other programs that can help with skyrocketing heating bills include the Earned Income Tax Credit, the PeopleCare program and the State Emergency Relief Program.

The federal government also is offering assistance to those in need, on Thursday adding \$100 million to the \$633 million already in block grants available to states for emergency use in helping low-income families pay their heating bills.

Debra Dodd, a spokeswoman for Consumers Energy, said she has a message for customers: "If you got your bill and are shocked, give us a call immediately."

Enrollment in the programs is slightly higher than this time last year, but she expects that by mid- to late January, there will be a significant increase in enrollees, she said.

She said the average homeowner will see an increase of \$40 to \$50 per month this winter in their home heating costs.

Seasonally mild weather has given homeowners a bit of a break to start 2006. Forecasts call for high temperatures in the mid-30s or higher through next week.

Until March 31, Consumers Energy -- the primary provider of natural gas in the Kalamazoo area -- will provide its customers with an additional five days to pay their bills.

In addition, customers age 65 and older who notify the company of their age will never have energy services shut off before March 31. Nor would people who have medical emergencies or are on active duty with the military.

In fact, according to Dodd, cutting off a customer's gas is the last thing the utility wants to do.

Customers who are behind on their payments will first get reminders to pay their bills and then final notices. If the bill still is not paid, they will receive phone calls and even visits from Consumers Energy employees to their homes before their gas is ever shut-off, Dodd said. ``We're not in the business of shutting people's gas off," she said.

# Heating aid may not last this winter

Nick Schirripa  
*The Enquirer*

Calls for help with heating bills in Battle Creek so far are being met, officials say, but limited funding may mean there won't be enough assistance to go around. State funding for heat assistance is down from last year, but local contributions have increased.

The state has budgeted about 1 percent lower than last year's \$117 million for heat assistance, reflecting the cut expected to come from the federal government, said Maureen Sorbet, spokeswoman for the state Department of Human Services. "We ran out last year, so we are considerably short of the need we believe we'll have in Michigan," she said.

Last winter, local agencies, associations and businesses contributed about \$80,000 to help people pay for their heat when state and federal funding dried up.

The Community Action Agency of South Central Michigan already has received more than \$200,000 for heat assistance through April 30, according to Community Resource Manager Tonya Mason, and the agency already has spent about \$64,000 since Oct. 1. Last year, CAA spent \$115,838 on helping people with utility costs.

Mason said most of the money has come from the Battle Creek United Way and Semco Energy, to the tune of about \$100,000, to help Semco customers. The United Way has committed another \$100,000 for Consumers Energy customers in the area outside of Battle Creek.

The increase in funds this year is expected to help extend CAA grant assistance in March and April, the last two months of the winter season, Mason said. The agency ran out of funds between January and February last year.

"It's really given us a cushion compared to last year," she said. "There still is a \$500 maximum per household per year, but it is really going to help us."

Tim Lubbers, spokesman for Semco Energy, said he is concerned about funding available for heating assistance.

"In '05, assistance ran out in Michigan before April, when assistance programs traditionally end for the season," he said.

Lubbers said Semco follows the state's emergency billing guidelines which include expanded shut-off regulations to seniors and low-income customers.

"We keep informed about all available assistance programs in the state of Michigan," he said. "The best thing for consumers to do, if they can't pay their bill, is to contact us as soon as possible so there is time to get them help. ... we can direct them to local agencies that provide assistance or we can get them on a budget payment plan — spread payments out to avoid a \$500 bill in January."

Besides contacting service providers, agency officials said people seeking help with heating bills should start with the Calhoun County office of the state's Department of Human Services.

People need to apply for assistance to determine eligibility, which is based on

factors including income and the number of children in the home, according to Terrie Brownell, a program manager with DHS.

If help is not available there, people will be referred by the 211 call center to community agencies such as the Salvation Army or CAA.

"We play the connecting role," said Kari Marciniak, 211 program director. "We connect people who are looking for resources with the agencies that have funding available."

A vast majority of the 279 calls in November and December from Battle Creek residents for heat bill assistance have been met, she said.

"It feels like we're making strides helping people pay their gas bills in Battle Creek," she said. "We're not turning people away, and that's good. If they live in Battle Creek and they qualify for the funds, we're meeting people's needs."

The few denials were issued because the bills were for fuel oil, which isn't covered, Marciniak said, or because the callers lived outside Battle Creek.

The CAA has not seen an increase in the number of requests, Mason said, but the amount of each request is averaging higher, making the increased funding even more critical.

"High heat bills two months in a row, and you're over our \$500 cap," she said.

"We've seen \$1,200 heat bills already this year."

United Way officials said the Michigan Public Service Commission has granted \$4.5 million statewide for heating assistance, but the local amount has yet to be determined.

Suzi Gore, Salvation Army family services director, said the funding is expected to come through this month or next.

The MPSC grant is the agency's sole source of heat assistance funding, Gore said, and last year, the Salvation Army sent \$80,000 to Calhoun County.

*Nick Schirripa covers Calhoun County and Marshall. He can be reached at 966-0692 or [nschirrip@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:nschirrip@battlecr.gannett.com). Read his blog in the News Extras area at [battlecreekenquirer.com](http://battlecreekenquirer.com).*

Originally published January 8, 2006

# Holland family wages fight for Medicaid

Sunday, January 08, 2006

By Kym Reinstadler  
The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND -- Stephanie Hogan felt confident navigating Michigan's human services agencies as a social worker, but that assurance is eroding now that she and husband, Paul, are fighting Medicaid to continue private duty nursing benefits for daughter, Keyan.

The Hogans had quadruplets born at 27 weeks gestation 13 months ago. Sisters McKenzy, Sidney and Abagayle are sitting, crawling and pulling themselves to stand, but Keyan's physical development is delayed by breathing and feeding problems.

Keyan breathes through a tracheotomy and is oxygen dependent. She is fed through a gastrostomy tube. Despite these invasive procedures, Keyan was able to leave DeVos Children's Hospital in April, thanks to state-paid home nursing care, during which the baby gets treatments to keep her lungs clear.

This care costs about \$500 a shift, but is less expensive than keeping Keyan hospitalized. The Hogans say only trained professionals can attend to all the baby's health needs, which doctors think she will outgrow.

The parents say they were shocked when notified Dec. 10 that Keyan's Medicaid birth benefits would expire Dec. 13, and the family's income is too high to qualify for other public assistance.

"It's appalling that we're being punished for being a hard-working, middle-class, married family," said Stephanie Hogan, 29. "Without more nursing help, our daughter's life is in jeopardy."

The couple resents being treated like freeloaders when they are able to pay all their other bills, which includes \$300 for diapers alone.

"We pay taxes," said Paul Hogan, 35. "We're trying to do right by everybody. We just need help short term."

The prospect of losing home nursing cast a pall over the Hogans holidays. The couple says they spent hours and hours on the phone with human services agencies, arguing Keyan's case for continued benefits.

They say they have been told their best options are for Paul to leave his job in information systems at Haworth Inc., get a divorce or give up Keyan to the foster-care system -- any of which would open a gate to more Medicaid.

The Hogans say such suggestions are reprehensible, but so far they were able to get Medicaid extended only through Dec. 31. Priority Health has agreed to foot the bill for reduced nursing hours through January while the couple continues to fight for Medicaid.

The Hogans' letter to Gov. Jennifer Granholm brought word that Keyan still should qualify for Medicaid because she is eligible for Social Security Insurance, a factor not recognized by local workers accustomed to sorting by income.

This news is encouraging, but it could take several weeks to be recertified for benefits, Stephanie Hogan said.

If coverage is not extended, the Hogans say Keyan's doctors will hospitalize her or remove the breathing tube. They hoped to keep it in place at least until May, when the threat of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) subsides.

Keyan is having exploratory outpatient surgery on her right lung Monday to determine what more can be done to treat her chronic lung disease, her mother said.

At birth, Keyan weighed only 1 pound, 5 ounces and was just 10 inches long because her umbilical cord had stopped functioning. The Hogans asked doctors to induce labor to save her life.

Despite physical challenges, Keyan shows no significant cognitive delays, her parents said.

The Hogans conceived their quads with fertility drugs. They used the same drugs to conceive their 4-year-old son, Jamahl.

Despite Medicaid trouble, the Hogans say their first year as parents of quads has been very life affirming, thanks to able health-care providers and volunteers they have affectionately dubbed "Hogan's Heroes."

"There were 70 guests at the girls' birthday party (Nov. 21)," Stephanie Hogan said.

"I cried as I looked around because we didn't know most of these people before the girls were born. Now, they're like family."

# Medicaid roadblock *Free 1-9-06*

*Proposed documentation rules would be a hardship to the poor*



**BOB HERBERT**

**B**uried in the nearly 800-page federal budget bill is a nasty little provision, ostensibly aimed at immigrants, that will make it difficult for many poverty-stricken U.S. citizens to get the health care they are entitled to under Medicaid.

Advocates believe that the provision, which will require Medicaid applicants to document their U.S. citizenship — which means producing a passport or birth certificate — may be especially harmful to poor blacks, most of whom do not have passports and many of whom do not have birth certificates.

There are no exceptions to this onerous provision, not even for people with serious physical or mental impairments, including Alzheimer's disease.

The budget bill is scheduled for a final vote in the House on Feb. 1. The Medicaid provision seems to have originated with a pair of Republican congressmen from Georgia — Nathan Deal and Charlie Norwood. The idea, Congressman Deal told me, is to create a barrier against illegal immigrants who might slip into the Medicaid program by falsely claiming they are citizens.

You haven't heard much about this latest threat to the republic because there is no evidence it is much of a problem. As the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has reported, an extensive study by the inspector general's office of the Department of Health and Human Services "found no substantial evidence that such false applications are actually occurring and (the inspector general's office), accordingly, did not recommend making the change that is included in the (budget) agreement."



PAUL LACHINE/Special to the Free Press

**So the savings will be drawn like blood from the sick and the poor.**

The problem will come when poor people who are ill get sucked into a nightmare of documentation when their focus should be on their illness. The center noted: "Many individuals who require Medicaid coverage — such as people affected by emergencies like Hurricane Katrina, homeless people or those with mental illness — may be unable to get Medicaid promptly when they need it because they do not have such documents in their possession."

Many poor people live far from the cities or towns where they were born and do not have ready access to their birth certificates. And, as the center said, a large number of black women, especially in

the South, were unable to give birth in hospitals because of racial discrimination. Many of them never received birth certificates for their babies.

A spokesman for the Senate majority leader, Bill Frist, who is a physician, said the Senate went along with the House proposal because the "members did not feel it was an unreasonable provision." He said applicants in serious need of care would receive it, and that Medicaid officials could accept the documentation of citizenship later.

I wondered what would happen to individuals who were bedridden, destitute, disoriented, enfeebled. They might receive care in theory.

But would they really? Stepping on their care seems a heavy price to pay to address an issue that very few people view as a serious problem.

I asked Abel Ortiz, who advises Gov. Sonny Perdue of Georgia on health care issues, if he was aware of any studies that showed whether significant numbers of illegal immigrants in his state were getting Medicaid benefits. He said no, although he added, "We have some cases that have happened."

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the new provision would save more than \$700 million over the next decade. But if illegal immigrants crashing the Medicaid program is not a big problem, where will the savings come from? How about from the reduction in enrollment of sick or otherwise troubled U.S. citizens who are poor and less than savvy about the arbitrary workings of the bureaucracy?

The budget bill is a good example of how the insiders and special interests get what they want in Washington, while ordinary people, who are supposed to be represented by members of the House and Senate, get bludgeoned.

Some members of Congress wanted health care savings — if there were going to be any — to be achieved by such measures as negotiating better rates with large drug companies and managed-care facilities. But that's not the sort of thing that flies in this day and age. So the savings will be drawn like blood from the sick and the poor.

Someday the pendulum will swing back, and the government of the United States will become more representative and more humane. Meanwhile, as Lily Tomlin said, "We're all in this alone."

**BOB HERBERT** is a columnist for the New York Times. Write to him at the New York Times News Service, 229 W. 43rd St., New York, NY 10036.



# Medicare drug snafus worry seniors

Monday, January 09, 2006

By Kathleen Longcore  
The Grand Rapids Press

Jeanette Newfer couldn't wait to get to her pharmacy to start saving money under her new Medicare drug plan.

But instead of getting her heart and pain medications, the Newaygo woman ran into computer glitches and jammed phone lines. Problems plagued the new prescription plan for thousands of customers and pharmacists last week.

"I had my Medicare Plus Blue card, but when they ran it through the computer, Blue Cross said the drug benefit was denied," the 71-year-old widow said.

Calling Blue Cross Blue Shield was futile. She got a "all circuits are busy" recording all day.

A Blue Cross spokeswoman acknowledged the insurer's phone system was taxed last week, but said problems were being worked out.

The learning curve as Medicare's first drug benefit goes into effect has been steep, said Pam Pinckney, a pharmacy technician at The Chemist Shoppe in East Grand Rapids. Some pharmacists said they were on hold for 90 minutes trying to reach someone on Blue Cross' professional help line.

"It's just been bogged down. We've had one person on the phone constantly because there have been a lot of little kinks," Pinckney said.

By today, the time on hold had shrunk to 40 minutes, said Greg Stancroff, a pharmacist at Momber's Pharmacy in Sparta. Last week he was unable to reach Blue Cross for days.

Meanwhile, he and other pharmacists doled out enough pills to tide people over until the kinks could be straightened out. "There are still some snags, and there are still some things I've got to learn. But things are going a little bit better now," Stancroff said this morning. Many seniors who enrolled in plans had not received their membership cards last week. And there was no tutorial for pharmacists, who had to deal with new customer ID numbers and computer processing codes. Anticipating problems, Priority Health brought in extra people for the phones, said Ed Keating, director of pharmacy services.

Priority handled 1,065 calls Tuesday and 1,132 Wednesday, he said. By late Thursday, Priority had processed 8,000 prescription claims under the new program, and the number of help calls dropped to 700.

"Folks are learning the system as quick as they can," Keating said.

Newfer finally received her medicines Saturday, after a reporter's call to Blue Cross. Even then, she almost was charged too much. At first, the pharmacy computer incorrectly listed \$40 and \$15 for her two generic drugs.

In the end she paid \$3 apiece, instead of the nearly \$100 a month it used to cost.

"If the program will work, it will be fine. But this was a very, very bad start," Newfer said.

Another problem has surfaced for spouses of seniors in long-term care, said Karen Miron, a Saint Mary's Health Care manager of pharmacy services to 5,000 clients in West Michigan.

Seniors in long-term care with no financial resources are covered under Medicare and Medicaid, Miron said, but many still have retiree health benefits for themselves and their spouses.

This long-term care group automatically was enrolled in new Medicare drug plans. Then, they were dropped from their retiree health plans, leaving spouses not in long-term care with no health coverage.

While numbers affected by this glitch are not huge, it is a big problem for those affected.

Some alert nursing home managers advised their residents to keep retiree benefits. But many did not foresee the implications of the automatic enrollment.

Advocates are trying to get retiree health plans to take these patients back, but some companies won't do it, Miron said.

# States Intervene After Drug Plan Hits Snags

By ROBERT PEAR  
The New York Times

Published: January 8, 2006

WASHINGTON, Jan. 7 - Low-income Medicare beneficiaries around the country were often overcharged, and some were turned away from pharmacies without getting their medications, in the first week of Medicare's new drug benefit. The problems have prompted emergency action by some states to protect their citizens.

Although there are no hard numbers, concerns expressed by state officials and complaints from pharmacists suggest a widespread pattern of problems.

At least four states - Maine, New Hampshire, North Dakota and Vermont - acted this week to make sure poor people received the drugs they were promised but could not obtain through the federal Medicare program.

Gov. Jim Douglas of Vermont, a Republican, said the state would pay drug claims for low-income people until the federal government fixed problems in the new program, known as Part D of Medicare. Michael K. Smith, the state's secretary of human services, said, "The federal system simply is not working."

On Thursday, the Vermont Legislature passed a bill declaring, "There is a public health emergency due to the federal implementation of Medicare Part D, which has resulted in serious operational problems, causing Vermonters to be turned away at the pharmacy without the drugs they need."

Many factors contributed to the initial chaos. Some people who enrolled in Medicare drug plans did not have any proof of coverage. Pharmacists could not get the information needed to verify eligibility for drug benefits and low-income subsidies. Insurance companies and their pharmacy benefit managers were swamped with calls, so pharmacists often had to wait an hour or more on telephone help lines.

Federal officials promised improvements, but state officials were growing impatient.

In Maine, Gov. John Baldacci, a Democrat, agreed to pay drug claims to provide medications for those in need. Since Tuesday, the state has incurred \$2 million of expenses for Medicare beneficiaries.

On Friday, Gov. John Hoeven of North Dakota, a Republican, said he had to act because "some low-income elderly and disabled individuals can't get their prescriptions filled through their Medicare drug plans."

In New Hampshire, Gov. John Lynch, a Democrat, signed an executive order authorizing the state to pay drug claims that he said should have been covered by Medicare. Republican leaders

of the state legislature called a special session to provide the money. The start of the Medicare drug program "has been a nightmare for many of our citizens," Governor Lynch said.

"Many are being charged unaffordable co-payments for prescription drugs - co-pays much higher than they are supposed to be. Too many of them are leaving pharmacies without their prescriptions."

Thomas T. Noland Jr., a spokesman for Humana Inc., a major national insurer, said that some problems were "to be expected in a new program with lots of new enrollment taking effect all at once."

Cynthia G. Tudor, a senior Medicare official, told insurers on Wednesday that they must "immediately make improvements" to "ensure that all beneficiaries get their prescriptions filled at the point of sale."

In a memorandum to insurers, Ms. Tudor said she had received "numerous reports" that they were "inappropriately denying some scripts," or claims. In many cases, she said, insurers are not providing the data that pharmacies need to file claims and get paid.

Dr. Mark B. McClellan, administrator of the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said on Saturday that he was working closely with states to address their concerns and to help individual patients. "We are filling close to a million prescriptions a day, including hundreds of thousands for low-income beneficiaries," Dr. McClellan said. "Many, many people are getting the prescriptions they need."

But in an interview on Friday, Stan Rosenstein, the Medicaid director in California, said: "We are hearing more and more complaints. A significant number of people are not getting their prescriptions. That has us very troubled."

Drug benefits are delivered by private insurers under contract to Medicare. The federal government is supposed to compute the subsidy available to each low-income beneficiary. But Michael Polzin, a spokesman for Walgreens drug stores, said that, in many cases, that information had not been shared with insurers or pharmacists.

Under Medicare rules, each drug plan is supposed to have a transition policy, providing a temporary supply - typically 30 days - of any prescription that a person was previously taking. But customer service representatives at Medicare's toll-free telephone number said they knew nothing of this requirement, and beneficiaries said it had been virtually impossible to take advantage of it.

Nationwide, 6.2 million low-income people receive both Medicare and Medicaid. About 1.1 million of them live in California. They tend to have many chronic illnesses and high drug costs. Cheryl Meronk, manager of the health insurance counseling program in Orange County, Calif., said she was referring people to hospital emergency rooms because they had been unable to get urgently needed medications through Medicare.

Under the standard Medicare drug benefit, which took effect on Jan. 1, the patient pays a \$250 deductible and 25 percent of the next \$2,000 in annual drug costs.

Over the last year, Medicare officials repeatedly assured poor people that they would receive extra help, so they would not have to pay any deductible and their co-payments would not exceed \$5 a prescription.

But Carol A. Herrmann-Steckel, commissioner of the Alabama Medicaid Agency, said that Medicare beneficiaries with very low incomes had often been required to pay the full \$250 deductible and co-payments far exceeding \$5. "One beneficiary borrowed the money," she said. "Another charged the \$250 on a credit card because she was in such dire need of the medicine."

Beverly R. Churchwell, an aide to the Alabama commissioner, said: "Some Medicare beneficiaries have not been able to get their medications. They are being turned away at the pharmacy."

John J. Morris, 42, of Ware, Mass., who has diabetes and multiple sclerosis, signed up for a Medicare drug plan on Nov. 16. The insurer told him his co-payments would not exceed \$5, he said, but at the pharmacy this week, he was told he had to pay \$23 for each of three drugs.

"I could not afford it," Mr. Morris said, "so I was not able to get my insulin or my M.S. drug." In Oregon, Sandy K. Hata, a field manager for the State Department of Human Services, said: "We've had calls from people in tears who could not get their medications. These people were being asked to pay a \$250 deductible and hundreds of dollars in co-payments."

Jane-ellen A. Weidanz, the Medicare project manager at the Oregon Department of Human Services, said, the \$250 deductible "is hitting people very hard," adding: "People are very angry and very upset. They are yelling at us. They feel that we lied to them. They feel Medicare lied to them. They feel they cannot trust anything we say about this program."

Texas reported a similar problem. Low-income beneficiaries are "being charged incorrect (high) co-payments," the state's Health and Human Services Commission said in an e-mail message to the Dallas office of the federal Medicare agency.

In Oklahoma, low-income Medicare beneficiaries were often charged the \$250 deductible. "They are being treated as if they were in a higher income bracket," said Mike Fogarty, chief executive of the Oklahoma Health Care Authority. "It's a common problem."

Steven E. Hahn, a spokesman for AARP, which offers a drug plan insured by UnitedHealth Group, said he knew that some low-income people had had difficulty getting medications. "We are taking this very seriously," he said. "This is a global problem, a systemwide problem, for all plan sponsors."

Elizabeth L. Stone, 86, who lives alone in an apartment in Manchester, N.H., is enrolled in both Medicare and Medicaid, has arthritis and a thyroid ailment and is in a wheelchair. She tried to use the new Medicare benefit to fill a prescription this week, but failed.

"I did not get any medication," Ms. Stone said. "People at the pharmacy would not give it to me because they do not know how they will be reimbursed."

Another low-income beneficiary, Terence J. Stevens, 65, of Lakeland, Fla., said he signed up for the drug plan on Nov. 15, the first day on which enrollment was allowed. His plan tried to charge him a \$47 co-payment for a drug to treat irregular heartbeats and high blood pressure. Mr. Stevens said he was unable to pay and did not get the drug.

In Alabama, William M. Beasley, a pharmacist and a Democratic member of the State House of Representatives, said, "I have had more difficulty trying to process claims for Medicare recipients than I've had with any other insurer in 43 years as a pharmacist."

Published January 7, 2006  
[ From the Lansing State Journal ]

## **Resident may have tried to report nursing home fire**

### **Records say woman called 911; employee denied any emergency**

By John Flesher  
Associated Press

TRAVERSE CITY - A woman in the room where a fatal nursing home fire broke out placed an emergency phone call about that time, but her voice was garbled, and it isn't clear whether she was trying to report a fire, an investigator said Friday.

Two elderly residents of Mather Nursing Center in Marquette County's Ishpeming Township died after the Dec. 12 fire, which forced the evacuation of 108 people on a bitterly cold Upper Peninsula night. State police are still investigating the cause.

The fire broke out in a room shared by two residents of the home, detective Sgt. Jeff Hubbard said. It spread "pretty quickly" after igniting curtains, said Larry Lehman, chief of the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth's Building Division.

According to tape recordings from Marquette County Central Dispatch obtained by WLUC-TV of Negaunee, someone dialed 911 from the room at 12:10 a.m. A female voice can be heard speaking in a low tone on the tape, but her words are unclear.

"I can hardly understand you. Speak up just a little bit," the dispatcher says.

The woman continues speaking, but again her words seem garbled.

"Do you need the police?" the dispatcher asks.

"Yes," the woman replies.

"Why? What's the matter?" the dispatcher asks. At that point, the line apparently goes dead.

Another dispatcher calls the nursing home at 12:12 a.m. and tells the woman answering the phone about the 911 call.

The nursing home worker says the woman in that particular room was "very confused" and had gotten upset because another resident was "screaming and hollering earlier."

"OK, so there is no problem there?" the dispatcher asks.

"No, everything's fine," the nursing home worker replies.

But at 12:14 a.m., the nursing home calls 911. "There is a fire in a resident's room," the caller says.

The two people who died were in different rooms from the one where the fire started, Hubbard said.

He declined comment on whether he had tried to interview the woman who placed the initial 911 call, but said "I don't think we're ever going to know" whether she was trying to report a fire.

Monday, January 09, 2006

## **Cox: Cops hurt homeless man 2 troopers said to have taken homeless man miles from Greektown, sprayed him with a chemical.**

David Shepardson / The Detroit News

**DETROIT** -- Moments after two state troopers had a verbal confrontation with a homeless man in Greektown last June, they put him in the back of a car and transported him several miles to near the State Fairgrounds, where he was assaulted, prosecutors say.

Today, those troopers are expected to be charged with felony misconduct. State Troopers Gabriel Seibt, 29, and Todd Parsons, 30, have agreed to appear in 36th District Court in Detroit for arraignment in the detention of the 50-year-old man June 25 near Greektown Casino.

The charges -- which haven't been made public until now -- are the second of recent high-profile incidents involving allegations of improper use of force by State Police against homeless people in Detroit.

Prosecutors say the troopers drove the man to an alley near State Fair and Andover and then one sprayed him in the face with a state-issued chemical spray.

According to the state Attorney General's Office, the troopers then left Roosevelt Dean Jr. by the side of the road. The troopers also allegedly didn't follow several department policies, including one that requires reporting the use of chemical spray. They also allegedly denied a confrontation with Dean -- although Law Enforcement Information Network records later showed they had run a check on Dean's name earlier in the evening.

Dean required medical attention at a hospital and later filed a complaint in the incident.

The Attorney General's Office, which is prosecuting the case, decided last month to bring the charges, but delayed the move until a Wayne County jury had reached a verdict in the April 14 shooting death of a homeless man by a state trooper near Greektown in Detroit. Trooper Jay Morningstar was acquitted of all charges Thursday in the case brought by the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office.

Seibt faces charges of misconduct in office, a five-year felony, and felonious assault with a dangerous weapon, a four-year felony. Parsons is charged with misconduct in office. The misconduct charges carry a maximum fine of \$10,000.

"Michigan has thousands of officers that patrol and protect Michigan's citizens every day, and we are thankful for their hard work and dedication," Attorney General Mike Cox said in a statement.

"The law is here to serve and protect, and no one is above the law, including police officers."

Sgt. Mike Herendeen, president of the Michigan State Police Troopers Association, questioned the attorney general's decision to file criminal charges.

"Violations of departmental procedure here -- if any -- could easily be addressed through internal disciplinary procedures. This incident does not merit criminal prosecution," Herendeen said.

Herendeen said the troopers are represented by local attorneys Richard G. Convertino and Carolyn Henry, who couldn't be reached for comment.

Capt. Robert Clark, the commander of the state police's Second Division Headquarters in Northville, which oversees the Detroit post where Seibt and Parsons work, said the troopers have been assigned to desk duty for the past several months.



He said the department has "looked into some allegations" involving the troopers, but he declined to elaborate.

Clark did say the state police do not have a policy of transporting misbehaving homeless people from Greentown to the edge of town.

The state police and Dean allegedly were involved in a verbal confrontation witnessed by Dean's girlfriend. The troopers, who were on foot patrol and near the end of their shift, transported Dean and told him to exit the car. Seibt is accused of using chemical spray.

State police referred the investigation to Cox, which is standard procedure.

*You can reach David Shepardson at (313) 222-2028 or [dshepardson@detnews.com](mailto:dshepardson@detnews.com).*

Monday, January 09, 2006

Detroit News Editorial

## **Pontiac should accept \$1M for homeless Suburb joins race to be named 'meanest' city in the country**

Pontiac is in the running for the most heartless city in America. To avoid the title, the suburb should accept a once-rejected \$1 million in state aid for the homeless.

City officials turned down the \$1 million for a number of convoluted reasons that don't hold water. At its core, their decision simply denies help to unfortunate people who need it.

"I've never heard of any city anywhere in the country turning down money like that," said Michael Stoops, executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, based in Washington, D.C. The analysis covers the 30 years Stoops has been working on behalf of the homeless.

In 2002 the coalition named Pontiac the fourth-meanest city in the country in terms of its attitude toward the homeless. The city is not listed in the current rankings but appears to be bucking for another shot at a national "mean" title.

Those who oppose the \$1 million say they don't want to attract homeless from other cities around the state.

But in fact, Pontiac and other Oakland towns have their own problems with poverty and hard luck families. Pontiac's population is more than 66,000, and about 20 percent live below the poverty level, according to the Census Bureau.

That means a lot of residents in the Oakland County community live near the edge. Turning down \$1 million in aid is unconscionable.

Thoughtful Oakland residents hope to reverse the decision.

Pontiac officials should listen carefully and then accept the \$1 million. It's the decent thing to do.

Wayne County

## **Homeless people to get Super Bowl party**

### **Organizers say it's not just a quick fix**

January 7, 2006

BY AMBER HUNT MARTIN  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Detroit's homeless people won't be left out of the NFL experience during Super Bowl weekend. In fact, they'll be invited to a party.

So says Chad Audi, chief executive officer of the Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries, which will open its activities center at 138 Stimson to the city's homeless people Feb. 3-5, with four big-screen televisions inside for people to watch Super Bowl coverage. They also will get food and clothes and talk to providers about long-term care.

"Our goal, first of all, is to treat them with respect," Audi said. "We want to let them enjoy the game like everyone else."

The three-day party -- which will be from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Feb. 3 and 4 and from 8 a.m. until the game concludes Feb. 5 -- coincides with a ramped-up effort to get homeless people into shelters across the city with so many out-of-towners, not to mention international media, in the city for the game.

Which is where matters get delicate, Audi acknowledged: Detroit officials have to balance cleaning the city's streets to present a spit-shined image with offering more than temporary assistance to people who need long-term help.

Some advocates for homeless people say planning a party for those in need is downright silly.

"These people are not concerned with sports," said Charles Costa, who has worked with Detroit's homeless people for more than 30 years. "They have real problems -- mental problems, drinking problems, some are alcoholics or drug addicts."

But Costa said if the spotlight shining on Detroit serves as a catalyst to help finally tackle the city's homeless problem, he supports it.

"You should look at this as a human concern," he said. "These are human beings, and they have problems. You have to address it."

Audi said that's his plan. When police encounter a homeless person during Super Bowl week, they'll contact service providers, who will be dispatched to talk the person into going to a shelter. There, workers will assess what help the person needs.

"We hope this will be a pilot program countrywide," Audi said. "We hope every city can benefit by seeing how the city connects the service providers, puts their hands together and helps the homeless."

Providers estimate as many as 13,000 people in Detroit are homeless, though many of those find shelter with friends and family. As many as 3,000 are on the city streets at a given time, providers say.

In dealing with the city's homeless population, Detroit officials said they won't follow the lead set by Jacksonville, Fla., during last year's Super Bowl. That city opened a temporary overflow

shelter giving homeless people a place to spend the day, watch television, shower and -- most importantly, according to critics -- keep off the streets and out of sight.

The shelter closed the day after the game.

Joe Richie, 52, a homeless man who spends his winter nights in shelters and his summers under freeway overpasses, said he suspects Detroit's generosity will dry up after game day, too.

"They just want to get us off the streets, keep us from panhandling," said Richie, who said his heavy drinking cost him his job at Chrysler more than five years ago. "When the game is over and we wake up the next morning, I still got nothing in my pockets."

But Audi said area agencies are hoping to keep the help flowing long after Feb. 5.

"My feeling is that the Super Bowl has become a wake-up call and a starting point for a long-term solution," said Audi, who was part of a Super Bowl homeless planning committee that's been debating solutions for more than a month. "Sometimes you need a cause."

Calvin Trent, director of the Bureau of Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment & Recovery, agreed. He said the Super Bowl has united area agencies like never before. And, he said, the groups have brainstormed plenty of ideas that should transcend Super Bowl week.

"This is a collaboration," he said. "We're coming together to see how we can make this a meaningful experience for our people who live here who are homeless."

Final details of a plan for the city's homeless people are expected to be hashed out Tuesday by the planning committee, Trent said.

That plan comes with a hefty price tag, however: Audi said his organization expects the three-day party to cost about \$20,000.

Shelters across the city also plan to expand, both by adding beds and by staying open 24 hours a day during Super Bowl week. In all, Audi said the Super Bowl likely will cost homeless service providers as much as \$100,000. The NFL won't help foot the bill.

Al Fields, the city's deputy chief operating officer, said he doesn't know how much the city can earmark.

"They're asking for a lot more than we're going to be able to give," Fields said Friday. "Maybe we can find it in donations."

*Contact AMBER HUNT MARTIN at 313-222-2708 or [alhunt@freepress.c](mailto:alhunt@freepress.c)*

#### How to help

- Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries is accepting donations -- in the form of clothing, canned foods and money -- to help homeless people during Super Bowl week. To donate, send a check to DRMM at 150 Stimson, Detroit 48226, or call 313-993-4700. More donation sites will be established before Super Bowl week.
- The Soup City 2006 in Detroit, hosted by the Coalition on Temporary Shelter, will be from 5:30 to 10 p.m. Jan. 23 at the Gem Theatre. Live music, a silent auction, a balloon artist and a magician will be featured. Tickets are \$35. Organizers hope to raise \$20,000 to help the city's homeless people year-round. COTS enrolls Detroit's homeless people in a 90-day program to help them find jobs and homes. For details, call 313-831-3777.

•AMBER HUNT MARTIN

Wayne County

## **Westland gives homeless center cold shoulder**

January 9, 2006

BY MELANIE D. SCOTT  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Though Full Gospel Temple in Westland has been unable to find a new home for its warming center, church officials say they have not given up on helping the homeless.

The warming center was closed nearly three months ago under an order from the city's Zoning Board of Appeals.

The church's soup kitchen was also closed, but reopened Oct. 24 at Westland Mayor Sandra Cicirelli's request.

The soup kitchen, which operates from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays, and the warming center are in a building known as the Lighthouse, next door to the church.

The zoning board said the church had no authority to operate either one.

Church officials are concerned because they have to turn away people seeking shelter from the cold. The warming center, a temporary shelter for homeless people, typically operated during January, February and March.

"We set it up that way because it's the coldest part of the year," said Ruby Beneteau, pastor of the church's Lighthouse Home Missions program.

"It's difficult finding shelter for the homeless all year. It gets more difficult in the fall, and in the winter, it's very hard," Beneteau said.

"We have the heat, showers, cots and blankets here, but we can't let them in. What do you tell someone who is freezing to death?"

The Lighthouse Center came under scrutiny after some residents raised concerns about seeing homeless people and panhandlers in a residential area.

Some residents, including parents of students who attend Adams Middle School and Lincoln Elementary School, also voiced opposition.

The church and the Lighthouse are adjacent to both schools. The church is on Palmer Road between Venoy and Wayne Roads.

After meeting with Beneteau and the church's pastor, Rev. Michael Enersen in late October, Cicirelli said she would help the church find a more suitable location within the city for a warming center.

But the city has been unable to find a location, and although Cicirelli has talked to people on the county level, nothing has happened.

So far Beneteau and Enersen, as well as numerous volunteers at the church, have been referring homeless people to other agencies such as the Salvation Army, Wayne Metro and ChristNet, based in Ecorse.

"We make referrals, but I don't think people understand that most of the shelters only take families and children. They don't take single people," Beneteau said. "ChristNet takes 30 people for 30 days, but once they're full, they won't take more."

While church and city officials try to brainstorm ideas for a warming center site, the church plans to face the Zoning Board of Appeals on Jan. 18 in an effort to gain a variance to operate its soup kitchen on a long-term basis.

Contact **MELANIE D. SCOTT** at 248-351-3681 or [mdscott@freepress.com](mailto:mdscott@freepress.com).

# Shelter director aims to 'reach, help'

Monday, January 09, 2006

By Paul R. Kopenkoskey  
The Grand Rapids Press

HASTINGS -- The new executive director of Barry County's only shelter for homeless and abused women said she sought the position because it enables her to help people on a larger scale.

Christine Hiar, who has 15 years experience as a mental health and substance abuse counselor, said the top job at Green Gables Haven also will enable her to apply her fundraising skills for the shelter.

"There is a very limited number of people you really reach with a case load (as a counselor)," said Hiar, 37, who started her new job Jan. 3.

"As a director, that number is multiplied by 10 in terms of people I'm able to reach and help," she said.

Hiar was a counselor for Carmen-Ainsworth and Bendle high schools and a substance abuse therapist for Insight Recovery Center, all in Flint.

She also worked as an anti-gang consultant for Flint, Port Huron and Detroit police departments. Outgoing executive director Sandi Drummond said the Green Gables board of directors selected Hiar from a pool of 24 candidates because of the experience she possesses.

"Her knowledge of human services and her passion for the cause and her ability to raise money impressed us," Drummond said. "She is a trained counselor and started programs before so she can bring a lot of expertise to the shelter."

Green Gables helps an annual average of 275 homeless and abused women and their children find temporary shelter, food, legal assistance and employment.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**January 6, 2006**

# **Laws Protecting Michigan's Children Now in Effect**

## ***Granholm Says Nothing More Important than Safety of Our Children***

LANSING – In her weekly radio address, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today highlighted new Child Protect Laws that she called for and signed into law in September and that took effect January 1. The laws are aimed at protecting children from sexual predators while at school or day care and strengthening reporting requirements for convicted sex offenders.

"Nothing is more important than the safety of our children," Granholm said. "This New Year, law enforcement officers, school officials, and parents in Michigan are armed with new laws to keep sexual predators away from our children, and to keep our children safe from harm."

On January 1 the bipartisan legislation took effect to help ensure that sex offenders are nowhere near our children; to engage citizens to be vigilant about protecting our kids; and to put new penalties in place that show sex offenders we mean business.

The measures include:

- creating a 1,000 foot safety zone around Michigan schools, shielding students and prohibiting sexual predators from working in, near, or loitering outside school buildings;
- requiring criminal background checks for those who operate group day care homes and child care and day care centers; and,
- requiring people already on the state's Sex Offender Registry to notify authorities immediately upon relocating, or face stiff penalties for failing to do so.

"In 2006 we are working to make children in Michigan safer than ever before," Granholm said. "I want to applaud the Legislature for taking quick action on my proposals to put these important laws on the books."

The Governor's weekly radio address is released each Friday at 10:00 a.m. and may be heard on broadcast stations across that state through an affiliation with the Michigan Association of Broadcasters. The address will also be available on the Governor's Website on Mondays as a podcast for general distribution to personal MP3 players and home computers.

**###**



Michigan Report

January 6, 2006

## **GRANHOLM HIGHLIGHTS CHILD SAFETY LAWS**

New Michigan laws that went into effect on January 1 will provide greater protection for the state's children, Governor Jennifer Granholm said in her weekly radio address.

The different bills – which prohibit convicted sexual predators from being within 1,000 feet of state schools, require criminal background checks for day care center operators, and requiring persons listed on the state's sexual offender registry to immediately notify authorities if they move – were signed earlier in 2005 but did not take effect until January.

Ms. Granholm's address said, "Nothing is more important than the safety of our children."  
“

In the New Year, “we are working to make children in Michigan safer than ever before. I want to applaud the Legislature for taking quick action on my proposals to put these important laws on the books.”

*MIRS*

*January 6, 2006*

## **Child Safety Focus Of Gov's Weekly Radio Spot**

Legislation that took effect Jan. 1 to protect children from sexual predators was the focus of Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM**'s weekly radio address.

"Nothing is more important than the safety of our children," Granholm said. "This New Year, law enforcement officers, school officials, and parents in Michigan are armed with new laws to keep sexual predators away from our children, and to keep our children safe from harm."

The laws were designed to protect children from sexual predators while at school or day care and strengthen reporting requirements for convicted sex offenders.

The bills provide for:

- Creating a 1,000-foot safety zone around Michigan schools where sex offenders cannot work in (on a regular basis) or loiter in.
- Require criminal background checks for those who operate group day care homes and child care and day care centers.
- Require people already on the state's Sex Offender Registry to notify authorities immediately when they move.

"In 2006, we are working to make children in Michigan safer than ever before," the governor said. "And I want to applaud the Legislature for taking quick action on my proposals to put these important laws on the books."

The weekly address is released each Friday at 10 a.m. and may be heard on broadcast stations across the state over the weekend. The address will also be available on the governor's website on Monday for general distribution to personal MP3 players and home computers.

# 'Very disturbing, very dangerous'

## Men to be charged in cocaine case involving 3-year-old

Saturday, January 07, 2006

By Scott Hagen  
shagen@citpat.com -- 768-4929

The police officer searching the car didn't see the cocaine at first until he removed the 3-year-old boy. Then, he saw 63 packets of powder.

Two men, a 30-year-old Detroit man who was driving the car and a 29-year-old passenger from Albion, were arrested Friday morning and expected to be formally charged today or Monday. Their names are being withheld until then.

Each man faces a count of cocaine possession with intent to distribute and a count of second-degree child abuse.

"Very disturbing. Very dangerous to the child," Chief Assistant Prosecutor Mark Blumer said.

"And unquestionably a form of abuse."

Police originally did not release the child to the father when he came to the police station later that morning. It's unclear if the child has been released to his family.

Jackson police officers stopped the men after a disturbance at Sauk Trail Post, a club on Prospect Street.

The two men who were driving the car, as well as another man who was the child's father, apparently started fighting with a man over a stolen jacket, according to the police report.

A shot was fired and people fled, police said. Witnesses told police that three men ran to a black Cadillac sedan and drove off.

The father told police he directed the driver to a friend's house on S. Milwaukee Street, where he picked up his child and asked the two men to drive the child to Albion to stay with family. The father remained at the house in Jackson, according to a police report.

Police stopped the Cadillac shortly after at the intersection of Euclid and Francis streets. The driver and passenger were placed in custody on suspicion of being involved with the incident at the Sauk Post Trail.

An initial search of the vehicle turned up nothing. But after the 3-year-old was removed from the car, officers found 63 packets of cocaine inside a large baggy that the child had been sitting on, according to a police report.

"It was wrapped in 63 packages. It was clearly a distributor's type of arrangement," Blumer said.

The packets contained about 8 grams of powder cocaine, with an estimated street value of \$800, said Detective Lt. Steve Galbreath, who works with the Jackson Narcotics Enforcement Team.

Blumer said the father, who apparently placed the child in the car, is not being charged because it is unclear if the man knew the cocaine was in the car.

"We don't know how that child ended up in that car for sure. We've heard varying stories,"

Blumer said. "If we determine through further investigation that the father knew he was putting his son in that position then we'll certainly think about charges for him, too."

The maximum sentence for cocaine possession with intent to distribute is 20 years in prison, with a maximum of four years in prison for second-degree child abuse.

Published January 7, 2006

[ From the Lansing State Journal ]

## **Police detect cocaine packets under toddler Boy's father said he was unaware of drugs in car**

Associated Press

JACKSON - Police say they found a car seat being used to carry more than a child.

An officer who stopped a Cadillac early Friday during an investigation into a shooting at a club called the Sauk Trail Post found a 3-year-old boy sitting on 63 packets of cocaine in the back seat, police said.

The 30-year-old driver from Detroit and his 29-year-old passenger from Albion, whose names weren't released, were arrested.

Deputy Chief Matt Heins said Jackson police were investigating whether the men were involved in the shooting. The car apparently matched the description of a car seen leaving the club.

The boy's father, from Albion, told police he asked one of the men to take the child to be with relatives in the Albion area, and that he wasn't aware of any drugs in the car.

The packets were stacked in a car seat, and the boy was sitting atop of them, The Jackson Citizen Patriot reported. An estimate of the street value of the cocaine wasn't available. No one was injured in the shooting.

Published January 7, 2006  
[ From the Lansing State Journal ]

## **Hearing postponed in alleged assault by former boxing champ**

### **Thomas Hearn is charged with hitting son, who struck first**

By David Runk  
Associated Press

SOUTHFIELD - Former boxing champion Thomas Hearn will be back in court later this month after Friday's postponement of a pretrial hearing on a charge that he struck his 13-year-old son during an argument.

But the question of whether Hearn's son also should be charged sparked a public disagreement between the police chief whose officers arrested Hearn last weekend and the prosecutors overseeing the case.

Southfield Police Chief Joseph Thomas asked the prosecutor's office for a review to see whether Hearn's son should be charged, since Thomas said the boy either hit Hearn or tried to hit him before he was struck.

"The son was the aggressor, by his own admission," Thomas said.

But Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorceyca, who personally reviewed the police report and witness statements, said Friday that the boy wouldn't be charged. And he said it was uncertain whether the son was the aggressor.

"Regardless of what transpired, no adult can strike their son or daughter with a closed fist, two or three times, causing injury," Gorceyca said. "I am sure Mr. Hearn, who is a professional fighter, could not have been the least intimidated by his 13-year-old son's disrespectful attitude."

Thomas declined to comment on the decision, and Thomas and Gorceyca both declined to release copies of the police report.

Friday's hearing was delayed until Jan. 26 so Hearn's attorney could gather more information about the case. If convicted of misdemeanor assault and battery, Hearn faces up to about three months in jail and a \$500 fine.

Neither Hearn nor his attorney, Michael Smith, commented following Friday's brief appearance before 46th District Court Judge Shelia Johnson in the Detroit suburb of Southfield.

Police say they were called to Hearn's home by his wife Sunday evening on a report that Hearn had struck his son. When they arrived, police said they found the teenager with a small cut and a bruise over one of his eyes.

"This case is not a case of reasonable parental discipline," said Keri Middleditch, an assistant Oakland County prosecutor who is handling the case. "The injuries ... far exceed any bounds of reasonable discipline."

The police chief said the argument apparently began after Hearn asked his son to leave his brother's bedroom, where the boy was playing a video game, and the boy refused. The brother was not home at the time.

Hearn was arrested without incident and jailed until his arraignment Monday. He was released on \$10,000 personal bond, and the 47-year-old boxer was ordered not to have any contact with his son.

Hearn held WBA, WBC, WBU and IBO titles ranging from the welterweight to cruiserweight divisions between 1980 and 1999, and had memorable fights with Sugar Ray Leonard, Roberto Duran and Marvin Hagler.

# Woman arraigned in stabbing case

Saturday, January 07, 2006

By Scott Hagen  
shagen@citpat.com -- 768-4929

A 23-year-old woman who police said broke into her ex-boyfriend's house and stabbed him was arraigned Friday on a count of assault with intent to murder.

Nicole Kluk of Jackson had not been dating Matthew Hill, 24, for an undisclosed amount of time but the two have a child in common. She allegedly came to his house in the 1100 block of S.

Third Street, near Garfield Street, on Wednesday morning, police said.

Hill told her to leave but she gained entry through a screen door, picked up a steak knife in the house and stabbed him once in the chest, police said.

Jackson police arrested Kluk shortly after the alleged stabbing.

Hill was taken to the University of Michigan Hospital in Ann Arbor where he underwent surgery. He was listed in good condition Friday evening.

Magistrate Fred Bishop set a \$250,000 bond for Kluk and scheduled her for a preliminary examination in District Judge Joseph Filip's courtroom on Jan. 18.

If convicted, Kluk could face life in prison.

Saturday, January 07, 2006

## **Boy, 13, accused of armed robbery, faces possible life sentence**

Associated Press

BATTLE CREEK -- A 13-year-old Battle Creek boy accused of robbing a pizza place at gunpoint could end up spending the rest of his life in prison if he is convicted and sentenced as an adult.

Judge Gary Reed of Calhoun County Family Court ruled Thursday there was enough evidence to send Kevin Demott's case to trial on one charge of armed robbery and three charges of assault with intent to rob while armed. The trial is scheduled to begin Feb. 1.

Reed scheduled the jury trial before Judge Allen Garbrecht, a Calhoun County Circuit Court judge who will hear the case in Family Court. If Demott is found guilty, Garbrecht would hold a hearing to determine whether the teenager is to be sentenced as a juvenile, as an adult or as a combination of the two.

County Prosecutor John Hallacy said Friday the punishment for a conviction as an adult could be a prison sentence of any length, up to life.

The armed robbery happened Nov. 17 at a Little Caesars pizza shop. Demott is accused of entering the business with a gun and demanding money from an employee and three teenage customers.

The robber left the shop without taking any money. Police arrested Demott a few blocks away but no gun was recovered.

Two of the three restaurant customers testified during Thursday's hearing that they saw Demott's face as he walked into the store, before he pulled down a ski mask.

The pair said the robber pointed a gun at them and ordered them to lie on the floor.

Defense Attorney J. Thomas Schaeffer, whose practice is in Marshall, argued that when police took the three young customers to see Demott near where he was arrested, the identification process was tainted.

Schaeffer said the customers talked among themselves about their observations and that Demott was handcuffed and standing with police officers with a light on his face when shown to them.

Mike Lind, an assistant prosecutor for the county, argued that the issues of witness credibility were for a jury to decide.



Monday, January 09, 2006

Deb Price

## Move to ban gay adoptions will hurt children

Friends admiringly call the home of Jill and Renn McClintic-Doyle "The Land of Broken Toys." There, physically or emotionally broken children are taken in, cared for, and loved just as they are, regardless of whether they can be mended. In that very special place in Stone Mountain, Ga., no child is ever "unwanted."

During the past 15 years, the women, a couple for a quarter-century, have become foster moms or adoptive moms for more than a half-dozen kids, several of them babies. Each of the abandoned children was, as foster-care lingo would put it, "hard to place" because of HIV infection, mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy, blindness, race or other characteristics that scare away many would-be foster parents.

Take Christopher, for example, an 11-year-old African-American boy with severe autism. He can't dress himself or speak. "The woman who had him before was well-meaning but treated him like a potted plant," says Jill, who jointly adopted him with Renn after an earlier adoptive parent fled. "We try to get him to do things as he can. He's the greatest kid."

Or take Jonathan, born weighing just two pounds. He was so sickly that the couple couldn't bring him home. They mothered him in the neonatal care ward until his death, six days before his first birthday. "When Renn would walk in, there was such a difference in Jonathan. He never had his own crib or his own home, but he had his own mother," recalls Jill, a cheerleader for motherhood whose five biological children are now adults.

"Renn and I had both worked in hospitals and seen adults die alone," Jill explains of the pull they felt toward fragile children. "The idea that a child would die alone, without ever having felt loved, I can't imagine anything worse. We didn't value these children based on the length of their lives."

Repeatedly, child welfare workers turned to the couple for help. Antonio, Mickey, Halimah, Jonathan, Mary, Laurie, Bree, and Christopher wouldn't have had a chance to be mothered by the big-hearted couple if Georgia restricted gay parenting. But a state constitutional ban on gay foster parents, adoptive parents, or both could fly through the Georgia Legislature and go to the voters this year.

Even though a half-million children lack permanent, loving homes, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio and Tennessee also appear headed toward similar votes.

"First it was marriage, and now it's adoption," notes Carrie Evans of the gay Human Rights Campaign. "This doesn't have to do with the well-being of children any more than marriage amendments have to do with protecting marriage. It's about how far the right wing can go to enshrine anti-gay prejudice into state constitutions and use them to increase turnout of anti-gay voters."

Ballots in at least four states -- perhaps 13 -- will be marred this year by anti-gay marriage initiatives. Alaskans will likely be asked to ban partner benefits for gay public employees. And voters in Dearborn Heights could be asked to repeal a nondiscrimination law.

"We could have roughly half of the country's population voting on us in one year," says Dave Fleischer of the National Lesbian and Gay Task Force.

Saying she'd "walk across coals" for her children, Jill McClintic-Doyle calls the anti-parenting proposals "a tragic thing to do to these kids." She adds, "They are kids who deserve to be loved and deserve a home. Why deny a child that?"

The youngest victims of anti-gay prejudice will never know what hurt them.

*You can reach Deb Price at (202) 662-8736 or [dprice@detnews.com](mailto:dprice@detnews.com).*

Published January 7, 2006

## **Coverlets for charity are quilted with TLC Volunteers piece together objects of practical beauty**

Lansing State Journal

EAST LANSING - For the 16th year, volunteers at Country Stitches stores in East Lansing, Jackson and Flint will make about 150 quilts for area charities.

Volunteers started tying and finishing quilts Friday and will continue the Quilt-a-Thon today.

"People can still come and out help us," said Ann Covert Drane, co-owner of the East Lansing store. "We're getting about 40 to 50 volunteers each day, but we always can use more."

She'd like to get the number of volunteers up to 75 a day, as was the case a few years ago.

No experience is necessary and donations of 100 percent cotton fabric are appreciated.

The quilts are donated to such groups as End Violent Encounters or Eve; Gateway Community Services; and Loaves and Fishes Ministries.

Country Stitches donates the fabric, thread and quilt batting.

The East Lansing store is at 2200 Coolidge Road, one block east of U.S. 127 and Lake Lansing Road.

The store carries more than 6,000 bolts of quilt fabric and offers 1,500 classes a year in quilting, scrapbooking and sewing.

From staff reports

# Feds send shelter funds to county agencies

NEWS UPDATE

LAPEER CITY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, January 07, 2006

By James L. Smith

jmsmith@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6365

LAPEER - Service organizations that assist residents with food, shelter and energy needs may apply for part of the \$72,973 in federal funds recently awarded the county, said Jan Watz, United Way's director of programs.

The funds, a 2.2 percent increase over 2005, are awarded through the Emergency Food and Shelter Program, Watz said.

Local non-profit agencies that provide help with such things as rent and mortgage assistance may apply at the United Way of Lapeer County, 220 W. Nepessing St., Suite 201 in Lapeer, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The deadline is 4 p.m. Jan. 13.

Organizations must have an accounting system, an ability to deliver emergency services and a volunteer board.

Details: Watz, (810) 667-3114, ext. 303.

Michigan

## **CHRIS CHRISTOFF: With elections, expect fight on welfare rules**

January 9, 2006

BY CHRIS CHRISTOFF  
FREE PRESS LANSING BUREAU CHIEF

They'll try again for welfare changes this year. We'll see if both sides pursue constructive policy or political games.

There was much of the latter in December, when the Republican-led Legislature passed stricter welfare limits, and Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm vetoed them.

Not that she's against a 4-year limit on welfare. Just not that kind of 4-year limit.

You could boggle yourself over details of who would be cut off welfare when, or which welfare moms should be forced to work and which shouldn't.

What's clear is that in 10 years since real change started cutting welfare rolls, the idea of government welfare still packs a political wallop. Keep that in mind this election year when candidates are reaching for clubs to bash one another.

Being tagged soft on welfare is still poisonous. That might be why Granholm suddenly announced in November her apparent un-liberal support for a new, 48-month limit on welfare benefits for able-bodied adults.

Such a drop-dead cutoff wasn't even considered in the 1990s by Republican Gov. John Engler, the conservative king of welfare overhaul.

Engler was convinced that some people aren't employable no matter what, and cutting off welfare would hurt their kids.

Granholm scaled back her support for a time limit, and Republicans saw a chance to label her as a bleeding heart. As if daring her to veto it, they passed a bill that would cut off welfare to families after 48 months, with a few exceptions.

The veto came and so did GOP recriminations. Still, rather than let the current welfare rules expire Dec. 31 and invite chaos, the Legislature extended the rules through 2006.

Granholm's initial support for a firm welfare time limit shocked social services advocates.

She later explained that she wouldn't cut bare subsistence to needy families, only to able-bodied people with no "barriers to employment," like illiteracy, mental illness or substance abuse.

To which some scoffed: If they have no barriers, they wouldn't be on welfare.

Incidentally, the bill included provisions to place more welfare parents in school or in substance-abuse counseling to make them more hireable.

Federal rules limit welfare benefits to 5 years. Some states have shorter time limits, but allow so many exceptions that almost nobody gets cut off.

Michigan ignores the federal 60-month limit, a practice Republican critics refer to as "lifetime welfare benefits."

Welfare benefits go to families with children, not to single adults.

A single parent with two kids gets \$459 a month, plus Medicaid health care, food stamps and day care payments for parents who work.

The state spent \$390 million on cash welfare benefits last fiscal year and \$465 million on day care for welfare families.

Most agree that changes in the '90s accomplished much of what was intended. The number of Michigan welfare families has dropped dramatically since 1994 from more than 223,000 to 78,500.

But the number of people on welfare four or more years hasn't changed much.

It's about 50,000 individuals, of which 37,000 are children. So welfare overhaul pushed many into jobs, but the number of hard-core unemployable people remained constant.

Both sides have all of 2006 to agree on new rules. If left unresolved, welfare will be too tempting not to use as a club in the campaign for governor.

*Contact CHRIS CHRISTOFF at 517-372-8660 or [christoff@freepress.com](mailto:christoff@freepress.com).*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Kalamazoo Gazette

Sunday, January 08, 2006

### **Upton vote shows lack of compassion**

U.S. Rep. Fred Upton, R-St. Joseph, doth protest too much, methinks, about his concern for low-income families ("Protesters lament proposed budget cuts," Dec. 15). Whatever his rationalizations and machinations behind the scenes, the fact remains that he voted to cut \$51 billion from food stamps, welfare, child-support enforcement, student loans and Medicaid. Though for four years the number of people in our nation living in poverty has been increasing, though 65 percent of Kalamazoo Public Schools students qualify for the federally subsidized lunch program (Kalamazoo Gazette, Dec. 11, page A4), though the cuts he voted for will make it harder for some children to take advantage of The Kalamazoo Promise, Rep. Upton nevertheless voted to make life still more difficult for poor families.

Tell Upton (TellUpton@mail.house.gov) that he lacks compassion and has betrayed his constituents. Tell him, too, that the spin didn't work.

Nancy Small  
Kalamazoo

Wednesday, January 4, 2006

## **Study: Personal issues affect welfare status**

Women with persistent personal and family problems are at an increased risk of remaining on welfare for an extended time, according to a new University of Michigan study.

Kristin Seefeldt, a research investigator at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at U-M, was the study's co-author. She said the findings suggest that women who stay on welfare for a long time are more disadvantaged than those who left welfare quickly after the reforms of 1996.

Researchers looked at data on 556 women who received cash assistance in a Michigan county between October 1996 and September 2001. Women who lived with a male partner, were married or had fewer children spent less time on welfare than other women.

Women who spent more time on welfare had less education than other women and had health problems or experience with domestic violence, the study found. The study appears in the current issue of the journal "Social Work Research."



Published January 8, 2006

## State surplus

A Lansing State Journal editorial

Woo-hoo.

State budget director Mary Lannoye says Michigan must be restrained about surplus funds the state has identified in closing its 2005 fiscal year books. That's sage advice, since the surplus hardly appears the product of clever work by state lawmakers.

The biggest hunk of the general fund surplus comes courtesy of the estate tax; Michigan got \$70 million from it this fall, reports the Gongwer News Service. More money came from "unanticipated" payments in the Single Business Tax.

Yet the view of the Republican Party is the existing estate tax and SBT are impediments to Michigan. And Republicans control the Legislature.

Meanwhile, the state's School Aid Fund ended fiscal 2005 with \$98 million in surplus.

Yet Democratic interests have advanced education spending policies that would continue to require transfers from the general fund to the schools fund.

Restraint is indeed called for in 2006 - restraint in advocating tax cuts without matching spending cuts; restraint in advocating spending plans that exacerbate budget problems; and, most of all, restraint among politicians inclined to congratulate themselves on "creating" this surplus.

# Highest paid Michigan state government employees

Ranked by 2005-2006 annual salary\*

Rank	Name Position	Civil Service position description	State agency/ state office or facility	Annual salary Oct. 2005 - Sept. 2006	Annual salary Oct. 2004 - Sept. 2005	Years of state service (as of Dec. 2005)
1	Jennifer M. Granholm Governor	Governor (elected office)	Executive Office Governor's Office Lansing	\$177,000	\$177,000	3.0**
2	Jay B. Rising State Treasurer	Director	Department of Treasury Treasury Central Office Lansing	\$174,204	\$174,204	14.5
3	Michael P. Flanagan Superintendent of Public Instruction	Superintendent of Public Instruction	Department of Education Superintendent's Office Lansing	\$168,300	\$168,300	0.4
4	Clifford W. Taylor Chief Justice	Chief justice (elected office)	Supreme Court Lansing	\$164,610	\$164,610	8.0**
Tie	Maura D. Corrigan Justice	Justice (elected office)	Supreme Court Lansing	\$164,610	\$164,610	7.0**
Tie	Michael F. Cavanagh Justice	Justice (elected office)	Supreme Court Lansing	\$164,610	\$164,610	23.0**
Tie	Elizabeth A. Weaver Justice	Justice (elected office)	Supreme Court Lansing	\$164,610	\$164,610	11.0**
Tie	Marilyn Kelly Justice	Justice (elected office)	Supreme Court Lansing	\$164,610	\$164,610	9.0**
Tie	Robert P. Young Jr. Justice	Justice (elected office)	Supreme Court Lansing	\$164,610	\$164,610	6.0**
Tie	Stephen J. Markman Justice	Justice (elected office)	Supreme Court Lansing	\$164,610	\$164,610	6.0**
5	Norma C. Josef Hospital Director	Psychiatrist director-3	Department of Community Health Walter P. Reuther Psychiatric Hospital Westland	\$153,927	\$152,403	33.3
Tie	Shobhana S. Joshi Hospital Director	Psychiatrist director-3	Department of Community Health Hawthorn Center Northville	\$153,927	\$152,403	27.4
Tie	George J. Pramstaller Chief Medical Officer	Physician manager-4	Department of Corrections Corrections Central Office Lansing	\$153,927	\$152,403	11.8
Tie	Kimberlydawn Wisdom Surgeon General	Physician executive	Department of Community Health Community Health Central Office Lansing	\$153,927	\$152,403	2.8
6	Marcella R. Clark Regional Medical Officer	Physician manager-3	Department of Corrections Huron Valley Correctional Complex Ann Arbor	\$153,155	\$151,631	3.6
Tie	William F. Clark Chief of Clinical Affairs	Psychiatrist director-2	Department of Community Health Caro Center Caro	\$153,155	\$151,631	15.5
Tie	James Dillon Chief of Clinical Affairs	Psychiatrist director-2	Department of Community Health Huron Valley Correctional Complex Ann Arbor	\$153,155	\$151,631	7.9
Tie	Kathryn J. Edrie Clinical Services Director	Psychiatrist director-2	Department of Community Health Center of Forensic Psychiatry Ann Arbor	\$153,155	\$151,631	21.8
Tie	Nilanjan B. Gajare Chief of Clinical Affairs	Psychiatrist director-2	Department of Community Health Kalamazoo Psychiatric Hospital Kalamazoo	\$153,155	\$151,631	20.5
Tie	Luzbella Y. Imasa Chief of Clinical Affairs	Psychiatrist director-2	Department of Community Health Mt. Pleasant Center Mt. Pleasant	\$153,155	\$151,631	31.2
Tie	Venkataramana S. Lingam Chief of Clinical Affairs	Psychiatrist director-2	Department of Community Health Walter P. Reuther Psychiatric Hospital Westland	\$153,155	\$151,631	18.2
Tie	Hareesh B. Pandya Regional Medical Officer	Physician manager-3	Department of Corrections Riverside Facility Ionia	\$153,155	\$151,631	11.4
Tie	Yogesh J. Shukla Clinical Director	Psychiatrist director-2	Department of Community Health Hawthorn Center Northville	\$153,155	\$151,631	27.5
7	Hanumalsh Bhandla Director of Psychiatry	Psychiatrist director-1	Department of Community Health Walter P. Reuther Psychiatric Hospital Westland	\$152,340	\$150,837	21.5
Tie	Diane E. Heisel Treatment Services Director	Psychiatrist director-1	Department of Community Health Center of Forensic Psychiatry Ann Arbor	\$152,340	\$150,837	11.9
Tie	Craig A. Lemmen Director of Training and Research	Psychiatrist director-1	Department of Community Health Center of Forensic Psychiatry Ann Arbor	\$152,340	\$150,837	17.5
Tie	George F. Mellos Chief Psychiatrist	Psychiatrist director-1	Department of Community Health Hawthorn Center Northville	\$152,340	\$150,837	18.5
Tie	Usha R. Movva Chief of Psychiatry	Psychiatrist director-1	Department of Community Health Caro Center Caro	\$152,340	\$150,837	15.5

\*state of Michigan fiscal year is Oct. - Sept.; \*\*Years of service in current elected office; \*\*\* new to state employment in 2005; Information for this list was gathered from the Michigan Department of Civil Service in December 2005.  
For questions or omissions please contact: Julia Grimm, business researcher, phone: 377-1058, jgrimm@lansing.gannett.com.

## THE LIST

Business Weekly's look at the top performers in local business. These are the leaders in their field, the top decision makers who set the pace for others to follow.

**Last week**  
Highest-paid state government employees



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW  
DIRECTOR

## News Release

Contact: Stepheni Schlinker or Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

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### **Michigan Heart Gallery on Display in Grand Rapids** *Public to view professional portraits of Michigan foster children who are waiting for adoption*

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January 9, 2006

GRAND RAPIDS – There are more than 4,000 children in Michigan with parental rights terminated who are either waiting for their adoption to be finalized or waiting for a family. Most of these children are among those hardest to place – kids who are older and members of minorities and/or sibling groups. Adoption for older youth in the foster care system is a priority to ensure they do not leave the foster care system without a connection to a supportive adult.

Sixty of these children are featured in a heart-warming photographic exhibit called The Michigan Heart Gallery. The Michigan Heart Gallery will be on display from January 10 – February 10, 2006 at Celebration Cinema, 2121 Celebration Ave. NE, in Grand Rapids.

The Michigan Heart Gallery, a collaborative effort between the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange, the Adoptive Family Support Network and the Michigan Department of Human Services, seeks to bring our community closer to the faces and voices of children waiting for a “forever family.” The Michigan Heart Gallery features portraits of Michigan’s waiting children who come from various regions of the state and are representative of different races and ages.

“The Michigan Heart Gallery has been an amazing undertaking,” Kristen Donnay, intake coordinator for the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange, said. “The portraits of the children are compelling. They draw you in and make you feel like you know the child. Equally as impressive has been the time, energy and compassion that the photographers have brought to the project.”

Recruitment activities such as the Heart Gallery remind people that there are many children in Michigan who are waiting to be adopted.

“Most of the children featured have been waiting for a long time to find a family to call their own,” Marianne Udow, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services, said. “While we hope the children featured in The Heart Gallery will find families, the larger goal of The Heart Gallery is to promote the idea of caring for and adopting children from the foster care system. We know from experience that if these children are not seen, and if we do not continue to educate the public about older children who need families, then they are forgotten. We are thrilled that the public will have a chance to view these portraits, get to know the children and possibly take action to see if adoption may be right for them.”

-MORE-

The photographs in The Heart Gallery were taken by more than 50 professional photographers who donated their time, talent and resources to take portraits that help capture the spirit of children in the foster care system. The Heart Gallery allows these children to be seen in an artistic, poignant and tasteful photographic exhibit. The kids thoroughly enjoyed their photo shoot experience. Some children were able to help select which portrait to feature in The Heart Gallery, while others came up with their own poses and some were given lessons in photography during the photo shoot, allowing them to become budding photographers themselves. Professional photographer Andre LaRoche volunteered to participate in The Michigan Heart Gallery and photographed 11-year-old Anthony.

"After meeting Anthony and walking around the youth home looking for a location to photograph him, I had to wipe tears from my eyes," LaRoche said. "My son is four years old and I give him and he gives me so much love. Without him, my life would be empty. I cannot easily think of all the boys at this center, with no loving parents, without a home, with their hopes and dreams possibly out of their reach."

Another piece of The Michigan Heart Gallery is a small sampling of portraits of successful adoptive families. The Heart Gallery will feature up to 10 families who have opened their hearts and homes to children from the foster care system.

"These wonderful families show others that it is possible to build a family through special needs adoption," Udow said. "Despite the rough times that they might have faced along the way, they prove how much love and care can do for these children."

The Heart Gallery concept was initially founded by the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department in 2001 as a way to help foster children in protective custody who are waiting for adoptive families find the families they desire. Stirring photographs, which reveal the children's spirits and individuality, have helped many of them find loving homes. The Heart Gallery has expanded to dozens of states and cities since 2001. Heart Galleries all over the United States have been featured in *People* magazine, the *New York Times* and on CNN, MSNBC and the Today Show.

For the online version of the gallery or for more information about The Michigan Heart Gallery and how you can get involved, please call (800) 589-6273 or visit The Michigan Heart Gallery Web site at [www.miheart.org](http://www.miheart.org)

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